Muqaddimah al-Risālah

Written by:
Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d.386h)
Rahimahullāhu ta'ālā

الخلال

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, may Allāh be pleased with him and make him pleased, says:

All praise and thanks are due to Allāh who begins the creation of man by His Grace, and fashions him while still being in the womb [of his mother] by His Wisdom. He brings him out into His gentle care and facilitated for him his sustenance; and teaches him what he did not know. Indeed, the grace of Allāh upon him is immense and tremendous.

All praise is due to Him Who directed mankind to recognise His Existence through His signs and left them no excuse [to disobey Him or associates partners with Him or disbelieve in Him) as He conveyed His message to humanity through His Messengers, the best of His creation; henceforth He guided whomever He destined to be guided through His Favour, and he led astray whomever He deemed by His Justice.

All praise is due to Him Who facilitated the path of righteousness for the believers and opened their hearts to receive His reminders; so they expressed their belief in Allah [outwardly] through the words that they uttered with their tongues, and through their hearts [inwardly] because they were sincere in their belief and acted upon what was brought forth by the Messengers

and the revealed books. And so they learned what He ordained for them and abstained from investigating what is beyond, and sufficed with what is made lawful for them, therefore they abstained from the unlawful.

May Allāh assist both us and you in taking care of what He has entrusted us with and in holding to His legislated laws.

You have asked me to write a short treatise for you about what is obligatory in the religion – those things which should be pronounced by the tongue and believed by the heart and done by the limbs, as well as to include therein the acts of Sunnah related to the religious obligations – the confirmed (mu'akkadah), the optional (nāfilah) and the desirable (rāghibah), and to mention some of the morals and etiquettes related to these. Moreover, you asked me to mention some key principles and derived judgements in jurisprudence (fiqh) according to the madhhab and way of Imām Mālik Ibn Anas (may Allāh have mercy on him). And to add some explanatory comments taken from the scholars well-versed in jurisprudence, and those who are learned in exegesis. You explained that your reason for asking me to compose this treatise is the desire to teach these things to children the same way you teach them the letters of the Qur'an; so that their hearts acquire a sound understanding of Allāh's religion and law at an early age to relish its blessing and bask in its grace.

Having considered that, I decided to comply with your request out of the same hope of gaining for both myself and you of the reward

promised to whoever teaches the religion of Allāh or calls to it.

You should know that the most upright heart is one which is the most retentive when it comes to absorbing goodness, and that the heart most likely to hasten towards a good deed is one that has not yet been exposed to evil.

The thing that the people of advice are most concerned about and which those who desire its reward most want is to put good into the hearts of the children of the believers so that it becomes firmly established in them; and to make them comprehend what the tenets of religion and the limits of the Sharī'ah are in order that they may be satisfied with that and to make them realise those things in the religion which their hearts have to accept and their limbs are required to do.

Moreover, [to impress upon us the need] to educate them of what their hearts should believe in and what their limbs should act upon, for it has been narrated that 'Teaching the book of Allāh to children extinguishes the anger of Allāh' and that 'Teaching something to a child leaves a impression lasting that is as indelible as the marks of carving on a rock.'

Therefore, having said that, I included herein that which children will benefit from memorising, and attain honour for acquiring, and shall receive joy for believing in and acting upon, by the permission of Allāh. It was related that the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered us to command our children to pray when they reach the age of seven, and to discipline them should they be lax in it, from the

age of ten, and to separate the beds of boys and girls at such an age. Similarly, they should be taught before they reach puberty what Allāh has ordained upon His slaves, be it an action or a saying, so that by the time they reach the age of puberty, Allāh's commandments become firmly entrenched in their hearts, they become well-acquainted with them, and are able to practice them with comfort and ease. Indeed, Allāh has made certain beliefs obligatory for the heart and certain acts of obedience obligatory for the limbs.

I shall proceed to explain to you in detail all that I have mentioned in chapters so that it will be easier for those who are studying it to understand, if Allāh wills – it is Him we ask for guidance and Him we ask for help. And there is no power or strength except in Allāh, the Most High, the Great. May Allāh send abundant blessing of peace upon our master, Muḥammad His Prophet, and his family and Companions.

Chapter: That which is Pronounced by the Tongues and firmly Believed in the Hearts, concerning the obligatory matters of the Religion

These obligatory matters include believing in the heart and expressing with the tongue that Allāh is One and there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. Nor is there any (shabīh) like Him, nor any equal (nazīr) to Him, nor any (walad) offspring for Him; nor any (wālid) parent for Him; nor any (ṣāḥibah) companion or wife for Him, nor any (sharīk) partner for Him.

He Is the First, there is no beginning (awwaliyyah) to His firstness, and He is the Last, there is no end (ākhiriyyah) to His lastness.

Neither His Essence nor His Nature can be described nor encom-passed by His creation. The thoughtful will only reflect upon His signs, while abstaining from delving into, or attempting to investi-gate the reality of His Essence. [Allāh said], “and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His (Kursī) foot-stool extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.” [al-Baqarah (2): 255].

He is al-‘Ālim (the all-Knowing) al-Khabīr (the all-Aware), al-Mudabbir (the Controller) al-Qadīr (the all-Powerful), al-Samī' (the all-Hearing) al-Baṣīr (the all-Seeing), al-‘Alī (the Most High) al-Kabīr (the Most Great). He is above His Majestic Throne by His Divine Being (bi-Dhātihi). He is everywhere by His Knowledge.

He created mankind and He knows what his self ”hispers to him, and He is nearer to him than his jugular vein. “No leaf falls without him knowing of it nor is there any seed in the darkness of the earth, nor any wet thing nor any dry thing, that is not in a clear book.” [al-An'ām (6): 59]

[It is also required to believe, concerning Allāh, that] He rose (istiwā) over His Throne and has an absolute subjugation over what He possesses and owns [i.e. over His kingdom].

[It is also required to believe, concerning Allāh, that] to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names and Most Sublime Attributes. His Names and Attributes are eternal and everlasting. He is Highly Ex-alted above any of His Attributes (Ṣifāt) ever having been created or any of His Names (Asmā') being muḥdathah (something which came into existence, after having not existed).

[It is also required to believe, concerning Allah, that] He spoke to [Prophet] Mūsā with His speech which is an Attribute (Ṣifah) of His Essence (Dhātihi) and not something created (Makhlūq). He manifested Himself to the mountain and it disintegrated through exposure to His Majesty and Greatness.

[It is also required to believe that] the Qur'ān is the speech of Allāh, it is neither (Makhlūq) created to eventually vanish (yabid) nor the (Ṣifah) attribute of something (Makhlūq) created which must therefore come to an end (yanfadh).

[It is also required to believe in] al-Qadar (the Divine Decree), the good of it and the bad of it, the sweet of it and the bitter of it. All of this has been decreed by Allāh, our Lord. The measures of all matters are in His Hand, and its source is from His Qadā' (His ex-ecution of what He decrees). He knows all events beforehand; therefore all events occur in accordance with His Decree. Allāh's Knowledge encompasses all actions and sayings of His slaves before they come into existence, and everything happens by His permission. "Does not He who creates know, when He is the Most Kind and the All-Aware." [al-Mulk (67):14]

He knew everything before its existence; then it came to pass in accordance with His Decree. He leads astray whomever He wills by abandoning them through His Justice, and He guides whomever He wills by directing them to success, by His Favour and Grace. Consequently, everyone is eased by Him to what He already has knowledge of and has previously decreed as to whether they are to be among the wretched or the fortunate.

He is exalted above there being anything, He does not desire in His kingdom, or that there should be anything not dependant on Him, or that there should be any creator of anything other than Him, the Lord of mankind, the Lord of their actions, the One who decrees their movements and the time of their life-spans.

[It is also required to believe that] He sent the Messengers to man-kind in order to establish the proof against them.

He sealed and concluded the divine message, the forewarning and the Prophethood with His sending of His Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), whom He made the last of the Messengers, to serve as a warner, a giver of glad-tidings and a caller to Allāh, with His permission, to illuminate and guide mankind.

He sent down on him His Wise Book and by means of him He explained his upright Religion and guided people to the Straight Path.

It is also required to believe] that the Hour of Judgement is coming and there is no doubt about it and that Allāh will resurrect whoever dies; just as He brought them (into being) in the beginning, so shall they be brought into being.

[It is also required to believe that] Allāh, glory be to Him, multiplies the reward of the good actions of His believing servants. He pardons them for their major sins by virtue of their repentance (tawbah) and He forgives them for their minor sins by virtue of their avoidance of the major sins. Those who do not repent of their major sins become subject to His will, “Indeed, Allāh does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allāh has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.” [al-Nisa’ (4): 48]

Those He punishes with His Fire, He will remove from it because of any īmān they have and by this He will cause them to enter His Paradise. Allah said, “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will will see it. And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will will see it” [al-Zalzalah (99):7-8].

He will also remove from the Fire – due to the intercession of the Prophet (ﷺ) – whoever he intercedes for, from those who have committed major sins amongst his nation.

[It is also required to believe that] Allāh, the One free from all imperfections, has (already) created Paradise. He has prepared it as an everlasting abode for His friends (awliyā'), wherein He shall honour them by permitting them to look (nāzirah) at His

Noble Face. This Paradise is the one that He caused ‘Ādam – His Prophet and His Khalīfah in His earth – to come down from, based upon what was in His previous Knowledge.

He has (already) created Hell and prepared It as an everlasting abode for those who disbelieved in Him, denied His signs, His Books and His Messengers and He keeps them veiled from seeing Him.

[It is also required to believe that] Allāh, the Blessed and the Most High, will come on the Day of Judgment together with the angels, rank upon rank. All the different peoples are confronted with their accounts, He will then recompenses them (according to what they did), reward them (for their good actions) and punish them (for their evil actions).

On that Day, the balances (al-mawāzīn) will be set up for weighing of the deeds of the people, “And those whose scales are heavy [with good deeds] – it is they who are the successful. But those whose scales are light – those are the ones who have lost their souls, [being in Hell, abiding eternally.” [al-Mu’malūn (23):102-103]. They will be given their records containing their deeds; hence, those who will be given their records in their right hands, will be judged with an easy account, but those who will be given their records behind their backs, will enter a Fire.

[It is also required to believe that] al-Ṣirāt [the bridge crossing over the Hell fire] is true and people will cross it accordance with their deeds. Their speed in crossing it differing according to their

deeds (in their worldly life); hence those who manage to survive crossing it shall do so with varying degrees of swiftness [and hardship]. On the other hand, there shall be others whose deeds shall cause their ruin, causing them to be cast into Hell.

[It is also required to believe in the Ḥawḍ (the Pond) of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) where his nation will come and drink from it. Whoever drinks from it will never thirst again, and those who changed and altered the religion shall be driven away from it.

[It is also required to believe] that al-Īmān consists of what you say with the tongue, what you believe sincerely in the heart, and what you do with the limbs. It increases with obedience, and decreases with disobedience. The statement of belief is not complete without action. Neither the statement nor actions are complete without sincere intention. Furthermore, neither the statement, nor actions, nor intention are complete unless they are in accordance with the Sunnah.

[It is also required to believe that] no Muslim (Ahl al-Qiblah) becomes a disbeliever due to (commission of a) sin.

[It is also required to believe that] the Martyrs are alive with their Lord, receiving provision. The souls of the fortunate remain in bliss until the day they are raised up again. The souls of the wretched are tormented until the Day of Judgement.

[It is also required to believe that] the believers are tried and questioned in their graves, “Allāh makes those who believe firm

by giving them firm words in the life of this world and the next world. And Allāh sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allāh does what He wills." [Ibrahim (14):27]

[It is also required to believe that] over people are angels who have been assigned to accompany them at all times; whose only duty is to record people's deeds. Nothing of their deeds is absent from the Knowledge of their Lord. And that the angel of death takes the souls of the people by the permission of his Lord.

[It is also required to believe that] the best of all generations (in virtue) are those who saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and believed in him, then [the next best generation are] those who followed them.

The best of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) are the Rightly Guided Khulafā': Abū Bakr [al-Ṣiddīq], then 'Umar [Ibn al-Khattāb], then 'Uthmān [Ibn 'Affān] and then 'Alī [Ibn Abī Tālib] – may Allāh be pleased with all of them.

[Know that] no one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) should be mentioned except the best of what may be said about them, while refraining from the mention of the differences that occurred between them.

[Know also that] of all the people, they have the most right that a way out (an excuse) should be found for them, and that one thinks the best of them (having a good opinion of them).

[Also required of the Muslims is] obedience to the leaders of the Muslims – whether they be those who are responsible for the affairs of the Muslims or the Scholars.

[Also required of the Muslims is] strict following of Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ (the Righteous Predecessors) and adhering to the knowledge and guidance which they left behind; and seeking forgiveness for them.

[Also required of the Muslims is] abandoning arguing and disputing in the religion.

[Also required of the Muslims is] abandoning everything which has been innovated by al-muḥdithün (those who innovate in the Religion).